

## Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Progress Report

### Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)

**Grantee Name:** Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council

**Project title:** Sierra Cascade Foothills Area Conservation Report

**SNC Reference Number:** G0770015 **Submittal Date:** June 2, 2011

**Report Preparer:** Susan Kane **Phone #:** 530/798-6595

**Check one:**

☐ **6-Month Progress Report**

☒ **Final Report**

<b>6-Month Progress Reports</b> should reflect the previous six months. <b>Final Reports</b> should reflect the entire grant period.
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**A. Progress Report Summary:** (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

The Sierra Cascade Foothills Area Conservation Report (the “Foothills Report”) is a comprehensive examination of the wildlife, vegetation, land use, and hydrology of the Sierra Cascade Foothills Area including identification of possible climate change considerations.

The Foothills Report emphasizes riparian corridors and water resources in the foothills for many reasons. The rivers and streams are natural migratory pathways for wildlife and fish. Also, climate change has a particularly large effect on river systems. Finally, the foothills’ water resource conditions and regional role in water supply and flood control systems will become increasingly important to future conservation strategies.

The Foothills Report focus includes lands from between approximately the 500–3,000 foot elevation, in a band that primarily includes five vegetation types and their corresponding habitats.

The Foothills Report provides a landscape-scale assessment of the foothills area that will support regional conservation efforts for land and water resources. It includes current estimates of how climate change could affect hydrology and influence opportunities for land conservation in the region.

Conservation organizations, land use planners, and agencies will find the Foothills Report pertinent and highly useful in determining priorities and strategies to protect and enhance the important natural resources of this region. By integrating disparate studies and data, the Foothills Report will facilitate more effective conservation efforts, and will ensure that all entities working to protect and enhance the foothills area have a comprehensive look at the region, its needs, and its existing resources.

**B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved:** (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

The Foothills Report study was previewed at the Foothill Symposium held in Nevada City in May 2010. The forum was organized by the Bear-Yuba Partnership. Maps and data were shared showing wildlife and vegetation types, and the effects of climate change on the Foothills Area. Several of our members and partners were in attendance with all expressing interest in the final report.

The final report was completed in May 2011, and reproduced in a print version, and digitally for the website, and also for CD distribution. A web page was created for the SCLTC website to showcase the Foothills Report. All 35 maps can be viewed on the website using deep zoom technology. The report can be downloaded as a complete document or separately by section.

<http://www.sierracascadelandtrustcouncil.org/foothills-area-conservation-report/>

In May 2011, the Foothills Report was presented to the SCLTC Board, SNC staff members, and two Auburn NRCS staff members. There was good initial feedback from the group. Member groups were asked to read the report and send comments to the project manager.

**C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered:** (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

It was challenging to regroup after the State bond freeze given the scientists' increasingly busy schedules—in part because of the bond freeze. While conference calls were productive it is not the same as having the time to meet in person and refine the process incrementally. As a result, the final draft needed some editing to make the report more cohesive and also to make the report more accessible to those outside of the scientific community—one of the internal goals for the project.

Another challenge was revising the original draft reports in July 2010 after finding that GreenInfo had provided erroneous data. SNC GIS staff assisted tremendously with

examining the flawed data and providing current vegetation layer data --and also reviewing the revised vegetation map layers that was generated. The scientists donated some of their time in reworking first drafts and data sets since we had such a tight budget.

Because the report was late in being completed, we had the opportunity to incorporate some current DFG data into the report—a definite plus.

John Hunter, author of the vegetation section (and overall lead scientist), spent a considerable amount of time walking GreenInfo Network staff through the process of creating raster data for the tables. The first data sets were found to be erroneous due to using FRAP instead of CalVeg data. The second round of data sets took three months for GreenInfo Network to create.

Overall, it was challenging to work with four different consultants and keep the project work flowing. We were forced to stop and start the project many times while waiting for GIS data.

**D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved:** (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

This is yet to be determined. If we are able to make the maps interactive, and if the report dovetails with other reports that have recently come out – DFG’s Areas of Conservation Interest, and the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, a joint project with Caltrans, then this would be an unanticipated success.

**E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs:** (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Actual Dollars
Project Administration	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00
Consultants: Biologists, hydrologist, marketing research	68,675.00	68,675.00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$76,675.00</b>	<b>\$76,675.00</b>

**Explanation:** (if needed)

Additional funding was granted by two foundations which helped considerably to deliver a final report that encompassed much of what was intended.

**F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project?** (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

**1. Resources leveraged:**

- a. Resources leveraged to complete this Project (matching funds, in kind contributions, etc.).

SCLTC initially secured a \$25,000 grant from the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation in October 2007 to begin initial planning, mapping and research. In May of 2009 RLFF allowed us to allocate an additional \$15,000 towards project completion. An additional \$15,000 was secured from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. In-kind donations eventually totaled in excess of \$30,000. \$6,150 from our member groups in the form of providing map data and input on priorities; the remaining (approximately) \$24,000 was contributed by the Foothills Report authors.

- b. Resources leveraged as a result of this project.

This is yet to be determined.

**2. Impact on collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders.**

- a. Number of people/entities involved in this project.

Three scientists, three GIS people, two SCLTC staff members, sixteen SCLTC members/DFG staff, TNC staff, two SNC staff members, an editor, and a graphics designer, for a total of 28 people/entities (approx).

- b. Increased cooperation/decreased conflict among stakeholders.

Todd Keeler-Wolf was supportive of our efforts even though our approach was different from his. He understood that we intended to do a landscape scale assessment as opposed to square feet of field analysis.

**3. Capacity building within region:**

- a. Description of how completion of this Project improved capabilities of grant recipients, partners, or larger community.

Initial feedback indicates that the Report will be used by our members in strategic planning, grant applications, and outreach to stakeholders. Also, many people, both within and outside of the conservation community are interested in creating maps from the data layers, in some cases to create win-win situations for land development projects.

4. Project accomplishments:

a. The project succeeded in meeting the intended goals without attempting to rank properties for conservation. Rather, it was the intent to show a landscape scale snapshot and point out critical issues impacting land and watershed health, and the challenges of addressing these issues given the social, political and economic issues of each subregion/land trust area of influence.

b. Some of our members have already indicated that they will use the report to assist in strategic planning, grant writing, and outreach to those in their area of influence, and those interested in creating maps from the data layers. Also, stakeholders have indicated that they are interested in creating maps with the data layers being provided. Mark Relz, of USFWS, will use the data for planning and prioritizing the proposed California Foothills Legacy Area project.

c. It was a pleasure to work with such dedicated people. The scientists put a lot of thought into incorporating a large amount of information and data – something for everyone, even those outside of the scientific community.

d. It was challenging to coordinate meetings and conference calls with all four team members. This led to some delays in moving the project forward while keeping the thread of next steps without having to stop and review our goals. Initially, the scope of the project had to be more specifically outlined in order to create a report that would benefit land trusts and planners in particular, and have an outcome of great value.

5. Number of groups and organizations that participated in the development of the Report.

There were approximately 15 groups/organizations that were brought in to the discussion at various stages. Cheryl Belcher, the initial project manager, spoke with staff at The Nature Conservancy, Green Info Network, land trust staffers, and land trust partners, to get an idea as to what types of information to include (i.e. water studies), assess what was available, and reflect the most critical concerns.

6. Number of riparian corridors and water resources identified for protection in the Report.

The team decided not to attempt to rank or identify specific riparian corridors or water resources for protection, but rather present empirical data to support why these corridors and resources in the foothills need to be protected. Given the controversy surrounding NH2020, it was not deemed in the conservation community's best interest

to overtly call out specific areas for conservation. Most of our members, partners and stakeholders work in conservative counties.

The maps are the focal point of this report and the text provides backup for the map data. It is estimated that dozens of land trust staff and their partners and stakeholders will utilize this information in a variety of different ways. Given how GIS information has become more accessible to the public, there is increased interest in accessing the map layers that were generated and having the capability to create ones own maps. This possibility is being explored with the SNC

7. **Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies.** (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

Because only \$200 had been budgeted for printing the report, all hard copy and digital versions of the Foothills Report, plus a separate website page for downloading the full report, or parts thereof, were funded by a private foundation.

8. **Next Steps:** (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

The rollout of the Foothills Report has begun with Council members sharing the findings with their members, partners and stakeholders. This includes DFG field offices, USFWS, DOC, NRCS, WCB, county planners, landowners and local and State politicians. A blog is being set up on the Council's website to encourage a dialog about the report and pose questions to the Report authors. Members will market the Report in their newsletters, on their websites and in grant proposals.

The results will also be used at future Water Bond meetings. Also, the Council is exploring how the Report dovetails with two other reports that have just been put out, as mentioned in section D.

## **Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY**

### **Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:**

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

We have strengthened our partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in producing a report that can be utilized for land and water resource planning. It is the Council's intention to work with the Conservancy to make the map layers accessible to GIS users.

More answers to these questions will be forthcoming as the project is read by more partners and stakeholders. The Report has the potential to be an excellent tool for agency staff, county planners, stakeholders, and land trusts, and is expected to promote more collaboration and buy-in to conservation projects in the foothills and beyond.

### **Description of Project Accomplishments:**

#### **1. Most Significant Accomplishment**

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

The Foothills Report provides a comprehensive snapshot of the wildlife, vegetation and hydrology in the Sierra Cascade foothills — and the consequences of climate change. While the Report does not rank priority areas (as this would alienate some stakeholders), it is obvious in looking at the maps and graphs as to what the priorities should be. The Report is accessible to scientists and also those with little background in land and water conservation issue. Therefore, the Report is expected to generate considerable interest to a wide audience.

#### **2. WOW Factor**

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

The Report was put on the Council's website allowing access to the entire report and the ability to access all 35 maps using deep zoom technology. (This is seen as primarily a benefit for non-GIS savvy people.) It is easily accessible to everyone. People like maps, the maps tell a powerful story.

### **3. Design and Implementation**

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

The end product could have been better outlined in writing the grant. As a result, it took some lengthy discussions to frame up and prioritize information and data.

Also, from a logistical point of view, it would be preferable to use a biological consulting company with a very high level of GIS knowledge and expertise in land conservation issues. It was time consuming to have the scientists (with little GIS experience) have to explain what they needed to a GIS person with limited biological understanding.

### **4. Indirect Impact**

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

This remains to be seen. It is anticipated that this report will compliment at least two other reports that have come out recently: ACE, a DGG term meaning Areas of Conservation Emphasis. See: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/ace/>  
It was discussed in conjunction with the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project: A Strategy for Conserving a Connected California (a joint program with Caltrans). See: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/habcon/connectivity/>

### **5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution**

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

#### Collaboration

SCLTC member lands trusts were helpful in providing data on conserved lands and reviewing the draft maps for accuracy e.g. that the cities and towns were accurately portrayed in size and location, etc. We were able to capture additional conserved lands to add to the data provided by GreenInfo and update CPAD. Also, our members provided feedback on vegetation types portrayed on the maps which helped to verify accuracy.

The lands trusts view this report as a good resource overall with particular interest in the maps and being able to create their own overlays. Land trust members, i.e.



those belonging to a land trust where they live who attended the Bear Yuba symposium in May 2010, expressed great interest in the maps and raster data.

## **6. Capacity-Building**

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

As with most of the other regional land trusts in California, SCLTC is challenged by the economic downturn. Also, our focus is changing from providing training and conference scholarships because many of our member land trusts have matured considerably over the past ten years. Many have formed subregional partnerships which further impacts time available for tackling region-wide issues. The Foothills Report is the first big project that the Council has taken on, and our recent strategic plan review and work plan focus on doing a tremendous amount of outreach on this project. Also, the Council intends to do more advocacy in Sacramento and also be part of the Water Bond conversation. So we are more issues oriented at this juncture instead of training and mentoring.

For the better part of its existence, SCLTC has had either a part time coordinator or part time executive director. Therefore, we do not have much capacity. We have not been involved in on the ground projects however we can offer fee-for-service assistance to members with little or no staff for administrative and project work.

It remains to be seen how this project will improve capabilities of partners, or the larger community. Early indications show great interest in the project by community members, agencies staff, and land trust boards and staff members. Having access to all of the map layers would benefit conservation partners in the entire region.

## **7. Challenges**

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions “on the ground”?

The initial and most difficult challenge was to determine how to approach the scope of work as outlined in the grant application. The goals and objectives were ambiguous. The team had lengthy discussions to frame up on outline and rank priority threats in the region. This in turn shaped map layer decisions. One thing we chose to emphasize was having the narrative and the mapping information

accessible to a range of stakeholders – those with little or no GIS experience to those with a high level of expertise. Therefore, a report binder was created to serve as a workbook and something to be shared with staff, board, volunteers, and other stakeholders; the full report is posted on SCLTC's website; we anticipate working out an agreement with SNC to post all map layers on their website.

As previously discussed, we faced challenges from receiving erroneous data from GreenInfo Network, but we were able to work through it with the help of SNC.

## **8. Photographs**

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

Aside from the photos included in the Report, we have no photos to submit at this time.

## **9. Post Grant Plans**

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant? Include a description of the following (if applicable): (1) Changes in operations or scope; (2) Replication or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

Our intention is to determine a way for GIS experienced people to access the map data layers to create customized maps, depending on need. Information will be added to the Report website page to assist users regardless of ability. This would include information links pertaining to ArcReader, ArcGis.com, and of course navigating the online maps (already in place) using deep zoom technology.

It is our hope that SNC will be able to provide access to the data layers via their website.

Project funds have been expended. However, there is a small amount of funding that has been allocated to revising/updating two of the layers – Vegetation and Large Land Holdings. This update will occur within the next month. Beyond that, we will be talking with partners and interested stakeholders about a) using this report in conjunction with two other reports that have recently been released and b) ensuring that all protected land holdings are added to the appropriate data layers. There are no plans to revise the text or add more information until we secure funding to do so.

Grant funding opportunities are being researched with the idea of revising the report in 2012.

Our members, particularly those in the foothills area, have already begun talking to their partners and potential partners about the report. Also, the report is on our website and has received over 200 hits in the first two weeks. Further communication plans include: adding the Report information to members' websites; talk to agencies and local planners, supervisors, using it as an accepted reference and crediting it; use in grant proposals; take the Report to meetings with partners; use at future Water Bond meetings; introduce to lobbyists, Foothill Conservancy and CCLT.

#### **10. Post Grant Contact**

Who can be contacted a few years from now to follow up on the project? Please provide name and contact information.

Susan Kane  
[susan@sierracascadelandtrustcouncil.org](mailto:susan@sierracascadelandtrustcouncil.org)  
530.273.0752

Or

Jeff Darlington  
[jeffd@placerlandtrust.org](mailto:jeffd@placerlandtrust.org)  
530.887.9222

**SNC-approved Performance Measures:** (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

## Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Project Reporting Guidelines

Progress Reports are required periodically throughout the term of the Grant Agreement (Refer to Exhibit B of the Grant Agreement). These reports will allow you and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to see the degree to which the project is on track and achieving your projected outcomes. Your Progress Reports will further provide the SNC with information that will help us to explain your work to the Board Members and various other audiences. Timing of Progress Reports is specified in the Project Schedule included in Exhibit A of the Grant Agreement, but generally every 6 months until completion of the project.

A Progress Reporting Form is provided to Grantees on the SNC Website. **Six-month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous 6-month period; **Final Reports** should address each question for the entire grant period – looking at the project as a whole.

The form specifies the items you will need to report on. For the Six-Month Interim Report these include, but are not limited to: *A Progress Report Summary of work completed, Deliverables or Outcomes Completed, Challenges or Opportunities Encountered, Unanticipated Successes Achieved, Actual Costs compared to Budgeted Costs, Any Additional Relevant Materials Produced, and Next Steps.*

The Final Report will include additional information, such as: *Resources Leveraged, Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders, a Description of Project Accomplishments, and SNC Approved Performance Measures.*

Please make sure that you submit complete reports by the dates requested in your Grant Agreement.